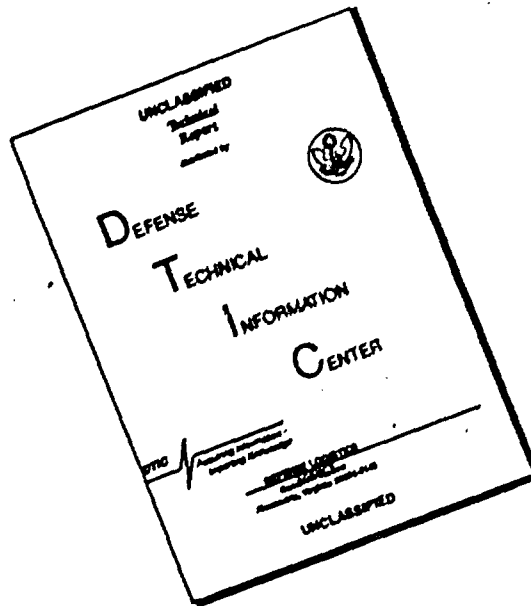


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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 45TH ENGINEER GROUP (CONSTRUCTION)
APO U.S. Forces 96312

EGD-CO

15 August 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned for Period 1 May 1966
to 31 July 1966 (RCS: CSGPO - 28(R-1))

TIRU: Commanding General
18th Engineer Brigade
APO U.S. Forces 96307

TIRU: Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: AVC (History)
APO U.S. Forces 96307

THRU: CINCUSARPAC
ATTN: GROUP-MH
APO U.S. Forces 96558

TO: Department of the Army
Assistant Chief of Staff for Forces Development
Washington, D.C. 20315

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AUG 19 1966

SECTION I

1. SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

a. 45th Engineer Group (Construction) was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on 1 February 1966 and departed Fort Bragg on 14 May 1966 for the Republic of Viet Nam. The main body arrived at Cam Ranh Bay on 8 June 1966 and moved into a temporary bivouac area at South Beach, Cam Ranh Bay. On 15 July the Group moved to Dong Ba Thin, RVN.

b. 45th Engineer Group became operational on 10 June 1966 with the attachment of the following units:

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(1) 39th Engr Bn (C)(A)

(2) 572d Engr Co (LE)

c. On 15 June the following units were attached to 45th Engineer Group:

(1) 20th Engr Bn (C)(A)

(2) 513th Engr Co (DT)(-)

(3) 584th Engr Co (LE)

d. During the period 10 June - 31 July 1966, 45th Engineer Group was responsible for all non-divisional troop construction and Engineer Combat Support in that portion of Viet Nam bounded on the north by latitude 13°15' and on the south by a line formed along the western and southern boundary at Darlac Province, the western boundary of Khan Hoa Province and the 12° latitude eastward to the South China Sea (with certain exceptions in vicinity of Nha Trang).

e. Operations during the period 10 June - 31 July were concentrated in construction at Dong Ba Thin Military Complex and the 6th Convalescent Center, Cam Ranh Bay, and combat support in the vicinity of Tuy Hoa.

f. This report will include only activities of Headquarters, 45th Engineer Group, as attached battalions (and separate companies attached to them) will submit individual reports.

g. During initial operations it became evident that a great deal of flexibility would be required in the operations of all Group or lower level units. TOE equipment and personnel allocations established by higher headquarters provides only the basis from which subordinate units need to vary.

h. Analysis of the Personnel Rotation System indicates that major problems still exist in the area of mass turnover of personnel assigned within a unit. Several attempts have been made to "dampen" the effect of this unit rotation; but methods such as inter-unit transfer and extension or curtailment of selected individuals have proven only moderately successful. Continued attention must be paid to this area by all concerned.

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1. Allied with "Unit Rotation" are the problems associated with officer assignment. Assignments directed by Headquarters higher than Group are meaningless when they reach the lower levels, as, during the period between assignment and arrival, it is impossible to predict either the nature or number of vacancies that may occur. Delegating assignment authority to a lower level allows adequate attention to be paid to unit requirements as they exist at the time of an individual's arrival in-country.

SECTION II

2. COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PART I

OBSERVATIONS (LESSONS LEARNED)

TACTICAL BRIDGING/OPERATIONS

ITEM: Earth Fill Causeway for use with Tactical Bridging

DISCUSSION: The limited amounts of tactical bridging available in Theater require that lengths of spans be held to a minimum. To allow temporary crossings of slow moving streams, lakes and ponds adjacent to rice paddies and similar low areas, a bulldozer can be used to push out a causeway into the body of water. Short span tactical bridging (primarily H4T6) can be placed over the resultant narrow gap. Timber abutments may be constructed if necessary at end of the causeway to provide end bearing to the tactical bridge.

OBSERVATION: Although the "causeway" bridging method does not produce a permanent structure, its use as an expedient crossing means has been highly successful.

TOE/ORGANIZATION

ITEM: Temporary Inadequacy of Unit TOE

DISCUSSION: Unit environment in RVN often requires work forces greater than those authorized by TOE. This is especially true in terms of physical security, R & U, and Personnel Management. This "overload" results from the isolated location of the unit, great distance between parent unit and subordinates and basic nature of counter-insurgent warfare.

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OBSERVATION: It is necessary to modify the TOE to meet specific field conditions. Since requirements are often temporary in nature modified TOE's should be authorized on a temporary basis.

HELIPORTS/OPERATIONS

ITEM: Heliport

DISCUSSION: In order to provide dust palliation and a semi-permanent area for helicopters, a landing heliport may be quickly constructed by "penetrating" a 150' wide area of indefinite length and placing on this dust retardent surface, a series of 24' x 24' PSP pads for helicopters. The area between helicopters should be laced with PSP walkways and driveways to prevent break-up of penoprime surface.

OBSERVATION: Designers as well as users tend to think in terms of solid helipads covering large areas, or surfacing constructed with some more permanent covering such as T-17 membrane. This latter type of heliport is certainly desirable, but in a theater where materials are not always available, the use of penoprime and a minimum of PSP produces highly satisfactory results.

COMMO/OPERATIONS

ITEM: Long wire antenna

DISCUSSION: When initial AN/GRC-19 communications with distant units became impossible with RC-292 antenna, a long wire antenna was employed and found to be successful.

OBSERVATION: In a theater, where much blame is placed on "old" radios many ills can be conquered by application of tested communications techniques.

GREASE TRAPS/LOGISTICS

ITEM: Grease traps and soakage pits

DISCUSSION: Many of the unit field ration messes are constructing inadequate grease traps and soakage pits creating a sanitation and health hazard.

OBSERVATION: Whenever possible units should construct grease traps and soakage pits in view of anticipated needs, i.e. knowing they will be in an area for at least 6 months, build a facility suitable for 2 months or longer.

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MESS ADMINISTRATIONAL/LOGISTICS

ITEM: Mess Administration

DISCUSSION: Units are arriving in-country without appropriate TM's, FM's and blank forms. Resupply of these items is difficult if not impossible.

OBSERVATION: Units should arrive in-country with at least 6 months supply of all appropriate field ration mess forms and manuals.

REPAIR PARTS SUPPLY/LOGISTICS

ITEM: End bits, tractor

DISCUSSION: End bits for tractor FT Model Hd-164, D89A, and TD24-124, units were experiencing short wear time due to rough terrain. Resupply was difficult. L shaped segments were cut from cutting edge and welded to outside edge of end bit producing a stronger and longer lasting item.

OBSERVATION: End bits so modified have wear period approximately 5 times as long as unmodified bits.

TRANSPORTATION/LOGISTICS

ITEM: Movement of repair parts and personnel

DISCUSSION: Due to wide separation of units and lack of land LOC between units, either sea or air transportation is required for most inter-unit movement. Arrangement for movement of these critical items and replacement personnel soon becomes full time duty of certain S-4 personnel.

OBSERVATION: Early recognition of transportation problems and training of key personnel in transportation administration greatly assists in smooth operation of inter-unit movement.

RECOMMENDATION

45th Group was organized and received its initial training in COMUS. The short time given the unit between activation and deployment allowed only minimal time to prepare for operations in RVN; however, since arrival in-country, I have had the opportunity to compare this short period COMUS activation and training to the possibilities of activating units in RVN and firmly believe that this latter course of action would prove more

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profitable in the long run. The principal problems faced by CONUS units arriving in RVN are the length of time necessary to become familiar with local "ground rules" and the built-in loss of the entire unit a year later. Organization of a unit "in-country" could allow unit personnel to be selected on basis of DEROS, required skills and experience. Security in most coastal areas is great and little danger would exist from enemy attack during the activation period. Therefore, I recommend consideration be given an D/A level to institution of an in-country unit activation procedure for selected units, particularly III type units.

GEORGE BUSH
Lt Col, CE
Commanding

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